

The President's Radio Address *April 3, 2004*

Good morning. This week, we received a powerful confirmation that America's economy is growing stronger. The Department of Labor reported that America added 308,000 jobs in March, the highest monthly job growth number since the spring of 2000. And since August, we've added over three-quarters of a million new jobs in America. The unemployment rate has fallen from 6.3 percent last June, to 5.7 percent last month. Over the last year, the unemployment rate has fallen in 45 of the 50 States. This is good news for American workers and good news for American families.

Inflation is low, and interest rates and mortgage rates are near historic lows. Manufacturing activity is high. Worker productivity is high, which means rising wages for American families. After-tax disposable income is up 10 percent since the end of 2000. And more Americans own their own home than at any time in history. Our economy's momentum is building. People are finding jobs, and the Nation's future is bright. America's families and workers have reason to be optimistic.

Tax relief put this economy on the path to growth. Since 2001, we've cut tax rates for everyone who pays income taxes. We've reduced the marriage penalty in our Tax Code. We raised the child credit to \$1,000 per child, and we have reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains. This tax relief is critical because all workers are keeping more of what they earn, and small businesses, which create most of the new jobs in America, have the resources to expand and hire.

As our economy adds more jobs, we will need to make sure all Americans are prepared to take advantage of new opportunity. We must help current workers and future workers learn the skills they need today and in the years to come.

Our economy has increasing demand for workers with advanced skills, such as teachers, health care workers, and environmental engineers, but too many Americans do not have these kinds of skills. So on Monday, I will travel to North Carolina to propose reforms of our Federal job training system, to give our workers the help they need. Better job training will mean better jobs for American workers.

We must also make sure our schools are preparing the next generation of workers. We've already taken action to improve our elementary schools with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. This good law is raising standards and hopes for all our children. But we must also address the needs of older students in high schools and colleges.

On Tuesday, I will travel to Arkansas, where I will propose ways to help high school students who are struggling in math and reading. I'll propose reforms that will strengthen vocational programs at our high schools, and I will propose more incentives for college students to take math and science, so America can continue to lead the world economy.

Over the past 3 years, our economy has overcome a lot of challenges, from stock market declines to recession to terrorist attacks to corporate scandals to war. Yet, our economy is moving forward, and jobs are being created steadily and increasingly. I'm optimistic about the future because I'm confident in the American worker and the American entrepreneur. And with the right policies in Washington, there are even brighter days ahead for American workers and American families.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:20 a.m. on April 2 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April

3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 2 but was embargoed for release until the broad-

cast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Job Training and the National Economy in Charlotte, North Carolina

April 5, 2004

Thanks a lot for the warm welcome. I tried to visit last February. [Laughter] That's when your fine mayor and Police Chief Stephens told me that they didn't think the Presidential motorcade would be an ideal way to plow the streets. [Laughter] The weather is beautiful today. Thanks for the warm welcome. It is great to be here in the great State of North Carolina in such a vibrant part of your State, the great city of Charlotte.

I'm here to talk about an important subject, which is our economy and how we make sure people are properly trained for the jobs of the 21st century. It's an important stop on my way to throwing out that first pitch for the St. Louis Cardinals. I've been loosening up over the weekend. [Laughter] My wing isn't what it used to be. But opening day of baseball season is a pretty special day for a guy like me who loves the game. I'm looking forward to getting there with the good folks of St. Louis.

But I'm particularly interested in coming here to Central Piedmont Community College, for this reason: This place of higher learning is doing a fabulous job of helping men and women seek new opportunities. This is such a hopeful campus. It's a place where the future is brighter for people who come here. And I want to thank you for the hospitality. I want to thank the faculty for their dedication. I want to thank the staff for putting up with me and the entourage.

I met with some business leaders earlier who were touting the virtues of Piedmont Community College's ability to use their

ideas and incorporate their ideas into curriculum so that the training programs train people for jobs which actually exist. And that's an important part of making sure our economy, which is in the strongest in the world today, remains the strongest in the world.

I want to thank Tony. He is an innovative leader. He was right, Mother is still the boss of the family—[laughter]—except Laura is the boss of my family. [Laughter] By the way, I don't know if you know this, but Tony married a school librarian. Beth is a school librarian. We both married above ourselves. [Laughter]

I appreciate so very much Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, who's traveling with me today. She's a very capable member of my Cabinet. Her job is to make sure that the training programs in place enable people at the local level to succeed. That's what I'm going to talk about a little bit today, about how to make sure that the monies we're spending actually fulfill their mission.

I appreciate so very much two Members from the United States Congress who have joined us. First, Congressman Richard Burr from North Carolina is with us—Richard. Richard is a good friend of mine. I appreciate him coming today. I also appreciate the Congressman from this district; Congressman Robin Hayes is with us as well. We came down on Air Force One; we spent more time talking about fishing and hunting than we did anything else. [Laughter] Those were the good old days.